

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ATHENS 4218

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PLOS GR TU

SUBJECT: GREEK-TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTERS MEETING AT STRASBOURG

REF: A. ANAKRA 3370, B. ATHENS 3980 (NOTAL)

C. ATHENS 2722 (NOTAL) D. 76 ATHENS 12453 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: ON MAY 5, AN EMBOFF DISCUSSED WITH THE GREEK MFA ACTING DIRECTOR FOR TURKISH-CYPRIOI AFFAIRS, DIMITRIS MACRIS, THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING APRIL 28 AT STRASBOURG BETWEEN FOR MINISTERS BITSIOS AND CAGLAYANGIL. MACRIS, WHO WAS PRESENT AT STRASBOURG AND IS NOW BUSILY PREPARING TO ACCOMPANY PRIME MINISTER CARAMANLIS AND THE GREEK DELEGATION TO LONDON THIS WEEK-END, WAS UNCHARACTER-ISTICALLY POSITIVE ABOUT THE OUTCOME OF THE BILATERAL MEETING AT STRASBOURG. AT THE SAME TIME, HE CAUTIONED THAT IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN WHETHER THE TURKISH SIDE WOULD, INDEED, CARRY OUT THE UNDERSTANDINGS WHICH THE GREEKS
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BELIEVE HAD BEEN REACHED ON AEGEAN ISSUES. ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE, MACRIS SAID, BOTH SIDES HAD AGREED TO EXCHANGE IDEAS AT THE "EXPERT" (TZOUNIS-BILGE) LEVEL WHILE PUSHING AHEAD IN PARALLEL WITH THE TECHNICAL WORK IN THE JOINT COMMITTEE OF EXAMINING OPINIONS, PRE-CEDENTS, RELEVANT PRACTICES ELSEWHERE, AND THE LIKE. ON THE AIRSPACE ISSUE, THE TURKISH SIDE HAD AGREED, HE

CLAIMED, TO WITHDRAW ITS MARCH 17 PROPOSALS (REF C) AND TO REVERT TO THE EARLIER NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORK BUILT UP OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS IN WHICH AGREEMENT HAD ALMOST BEEN ACHIEVED. END SUMMARY.

2. MACRIS OPENED THE DISCUSSION BY SAYING HE WAS MORE ENCOURAGED AS A RESULT OF THE APRIL 28 STRASBOURG MEETING BETWEEN GREEK FOREIGN MINISTER BITISIOS AND HIS TURKISH COUNTERPART THAN HE HAD BEEN BY PREVIOUS GREEK-TURKISH ENCOUNTERS. AFTER EXHAUSTING THE FIRST HOUR IN EXCHANGING MUTUAL RECRIMINATIONS AS TO WHICH SIDE WAS TO BLAME FOR THE LACK OF PROGRESS ON THE AEGEAN SETTLEMENT, EACH OFFICIAL APPARENTLY ENDEAVORED GENUINELY DURING THE REMAINING TIME TO SEEK A WAY OUT OF THE IMPASSE WHICH HAD EVOLVED IN RECENT MONTHS. SURPRISINGLY, MACRIS COMMENTED, THE TURKISH SIDE EXHIBITED AN UNUSUAL FLEXIBILITY THAT PERMITTED A DEGREE OF FORWARD MOVEMENT ON THE TWO KEY AEGEAN QUESTIONS OF THE DELIMITATION OF THE CONTINENTAL SHELF AND THE FLIGHT INFORMATION REGION (FIR). HE CAUTIONED HOWEVER THAT ALTHOUGH CAGLAYANGIL APPEARED REASONABLE, FOR THE FIRST TIME, IT REMAINED TO BE SEEN IF, IN FACT, THE TURKISH FOREIGN MINISTER HAD THE SWAY IN ANKARA TO BE ABLE TO DELIVER ON THE COMMITMENTS WHICH HE MADE.

3. ON THE CONTINENTAL SHELF, MACRIS REVEALED, AFTER SOME INITIAL SPARRING BOTH SIDES REAFFIRMED THAT THE NOV 1976 "BERN AGREEMENT" (REF D) WAS INDEED THE BASIS FOR CONTINUING NEGOTIATIONS ON THE AEGEAN CONTINENTAL SHELF ISSUE. CONFIDENTIAL

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ACCORDING TO MACRIS, CAGLAYANGIL UNEXPECTEDLY THEN TOOK A VERY AFFIRMATIVE STEP BY SUGGESTING THAT SINCE THERE WERE AREAS OF THE AEGEAN WHICH WERE INDISPUTEDLY "GREEK" AND OTHERS WHICH WERE UNDENIABLY "TURKISH", THESE SECTORS SHOULD BE DROPPED FROM DISCUSSION INASMUCH AS THEY WERE NOT CONTROVERSIAL. THE TWO PARTIES SHOULD INSTEAD, SUGGESTED CAGLAYANGIL, CONCENTRATE IN SUBSEQUENT NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ISSUE OF THE DELIMITATION OF THE DISPUTED AREAS OF THE SHELF.

4. THE GREEKS IMMEDIATELY CONCURRED IN THIS APPROACH, AND BOTH SIDES THEN PROCEEDED TO AGREE THAT THEIR RESPECTIVE EXPERTS (I.E., GREEK MFA POLITICAL DIRECTOR GENERAL TZOUNIS AND TURKISH AMBASSADOR TO SWITZERLAND BILGE) WOULD MEET BEFORE THE END OF MAY (IN AS OF YET SOME UNDEFINED CITY, BUT PROBABLY PARIS OR LONDON) TO EXCHANGE "IDEAS" ON POSSIBLE WAYS TO DELIMIT THE CONTINENTAL SHELF IN THE DISPUTED AREAS. PROPOSALS PUT FORTH BY EITHER SIDE WOULD, OF COURSE, UNDERLINED MACRIS, BE NON-BINDING, BUT RATHER

WOULD BE SIMPLE EXPLORATORY EXCHANGES. AT THE SAME TIME, MACRIS CONFIRMED, THE JOINT COMMITTEE WOULD CONDUCT RE-SEARCH ON RELEVANT EXISTING INTERNATIONAL LAW, PRECEDENTS, FACTUAL DETAILS, ECT., WHICH MIGHT BE DRAWN UPON, AS NECESSARY, TO ANSWER QUESTIONS POSED BY THE "EXPERTS." SUGGESIIIONS BY THE "EXPERTS" WOULD THEN BE FORWARDED TO THE RESPECTIVE FOREIGN MINISTERS (THE POLITICAL LEVEL) FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION, HE NOTED. THE FOREIGN MINISTERS, IN TURN, WOULD HAVE DIRECT ACCESSTO THE JOINT COMMITTEE FOR ADDITONAL TECHNICAL ADVICE, IF NECESSARY. FOR INSTANCE, SAID MACRIS, GREECE FAVORED THE IDEA OF A "MEDIAN LINE" FOR DELIMITING THE CONTINENTAL SHELF; HOWEVER, OBVIOUSLY THIS PRINCIPLE COULD NOT GOVERN IN EVERY AREA OF THE AEGEAN. THEREFORE, THE JOINT COMMITTEE WOULD BE CHARGED WITH INVESTIGATING PERTINENT DISPUTED CASES ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD IN ORDER TO OFFER POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVES TO THE "EXPERTS" AND THE FOREIGN MINISTERS FOR THEIR CONSIDERATION. THE ROLE OF CONFIDENTIAL

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THE JOINT COMMITTEE, EMPHASIZED MACRIS, WOULD BE ADVISORY ONLY; ITS OPINIONS WOULD NOT BE BINDING.

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ACTION EUR-12

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ATHENS 4218

5. MACRIS ADDED THAT THE ACTIVITIES OF "SISMIK I" HAD NOT BEEN DISCUSSED AT STRASBOURG SINCE THE GREEKS HAD MADE IT KNOWN TO THE TURKS EARLIER -- AND THE TURKS HAD AGREED -- THAT ANY EXPLORATION ACTIVITIES BY SISMIK IN DISPUTED WATERS WOULD BE A "PROVOCATION" WHICH NULLIFIED THE BERN AGREEMENT.

6. WITH SEEMING AGREEMENT ON THE PROCEDURES FOR NEGOTIATING THE CONTINENTAL SHELF PROBLEM BEHIND THEM, BITSIOS AND CAGLAYANGIL PROCEEDED TO DISCUSS THE AEGEAN AIRSPACE QUESTION, MACRIS CONTINUED. HE SAID BITSIOS BEGAN BY REVIEWING THE HISTORY OF PAST NEGOTIATIONS ON THE ISSUE AND COMPLAINED THAT THE ENTIRELY NEW TURKISH PROPOSALS PRESENTED BY TURKEY IN ATHENS ON MARCH 17 RZSEFFEL HAD ELIMINATED THE PROGRESS MADE OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS OF NEGOTIATION WHICH HAD ALMOST ACHIEVED A MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENT. CAGLAYANGIL RESPONDED SOMEWHAT LACONICALLY, SAID MACRIS, SAYING THAT HE, TOO, HAD WONDERED WHY IT HAD BEEN NECESSARY
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TO BEGIN ANEW, BUT HAD SIMPLY ACQUIESCED IN ENDORSING THE NEW APPROACH WHICH HIS ADVISORS HAD RECOMMENDED BE PRESENTED TO THE GREEKS.

7. AFTER SOME GIVE AND TAKE, CAGLAYANGIL AGAIN SURPRISED THE GREEKS BY AGREEING TO REVERT TO THE PR-MARCH 17 NEGOTIATING FRAMEWORK WHEREBY ALMOST ALL AIRSPACE ISSUES HAD BEEN AGREED UPON EXCEPT (A) HOW TO DEFINE THE WIDTH OF THE "SECURITY ZONE" ON EACH SIDE OF THE DIVIDING LINE AND (B) THE MINIMUM NUMBER OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT WHICH WOULD NECESSITATE PRIOR NOTIFICATION. (AS AN ADDENDUM, MACRIS CLARIFIED THAT, BECAUSE THE ATHENS FIR CONTROLLED CONSIDERABLY MORE INTERNATIONAL AIRSPACE THAN DID THE ISTANBUL FIR, GREECE HAD PROPOSED AS AN EQUITABLE SOLUTION ROUGHLY A 3-2 RATIO, OR, MORE SPECIFICALLY, THE GREEK PORTION OF THE "SECURITY ZONE" WOULD AVERAGE 35 NAUTICAL MILES, WHEREAS THE TURKISH PORTION WOULD AVERAGE 25 NAUTICAL MILES. TO AVOID REFERENCE TO THE FIR LINE, THE 35 MILES OF THE GREEK PORTION WOULD BE MEASURED, IN EFFECT, TO THE WEST FROM THE TURKISH COAST AND THE 25 MILES OF THE TURKISH SECTION WOULD BE MEASURED, IN EFFECT, TO THE EAST FROM AN IMAGINARY LINE DRAWN ALONG THE EASTERN COASTS OF THE GREEK ISLANDS IN THE EASTERN AEGEAN.

8. WITH RESPECT TO ADVANCE NOTIFICATION OF MILITARY AIRCRAFT FLYING IN THE SECURITY ZONE, IT HAD ALREADY BEEN AGREED, AS A CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURE, MACRIS RECALLED, THAT EACH SIDE WOULD NOTIFY THE OTHER WHENEVER FOUR OR

MORE AIRCRAFT PLANNED TO ENTER THE ZONE. IN ADDITION THE GREEKS HAD WANTED EACH SIDE TO NOTIFY THE OTHER WEENEVER A "CONCENTRATION" OF 25 OR MORE OF ITS MILITARY AIRCRAFT WAS FLYING IN THE ZONE AT THESAME TIME. THE TURKS HAD WANTED THE MINIMUM LEVEL TO BE TWENTY AIRCRAFT, MACRIS THOUGHT THIS DIFFERENCE WAS BRIDGEABLE. IN SUM, SAID MACRIS, IT WAS AGREED THAT SINCE THE GREEKS HAD PREVIOUSLY SUBMITTED UNACCEPTABLE LANGUAGE ON THE DEFINI-
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TION OF THE "SECURITY ZONE," THE TURKS SHOULD NOW UNDERTAKE TO DRAFT NEW LANGUAGE TO MEET THE TUKISH INSISTENCE THAT THERE BE NO MENTION OF THE FIR LINE OR ANY DIRECT OR IMPLICIT REFERENCE TO THE ICAO WHICH WOULD SUGGEST THE "PERMANENCY" OF THE EXISTING FIR LINE, SOMETHING THE TURKS WANT TO AVOID. MACRIS ALLOWED THAT THE GREEKS, TOO, WERE HEDGING BY DEVISING A NEW FORMULATION OF THEIR OWN TO DEFINE THE "SECURITY ZONE" IN THEEVENT THE TUKISH DRAFT IS UNACCEPTABLE TO THEM. THE AIRSPACE NEGOTIATIONS, MACRIS INDICATED, WOULD BE CONDUCTED IN ATHENS BETWEEN THE GREEK MFA AND THE TURKISH EMBASSY. WHEREAS NO EXACT TIMETABLE HAD BEEN ESTABLISHED AT STRASBOURG, THE GREEKS HOPED TO RECEIVE A PROPOSAL FROM THE TURKS BEFORE THE END OF MAY.

9. OVERALLMACRIS EXPRESSED A MORE OPTIMISTIC OUTLOOK ON THE AEGEAN NEGOTIATIONS AS A CONSEQUESCE OF STRASBOURG THAN HE HAS EVER SHOWN US BEFORE FOLLOWING ANY PREVIOUS GREEK-TURKISH ENCOUNTERS. NEVERTHELESS, THE PROOF WOULD COME, HE STRESSED, IN WHETHER CAGLAYANGIL WOULD BE ABLE TO FULFILL THE COMMITMENTS HE MADE AT STRASBOURG. MOREOVER, HE ADDED, THERE WOULD NOT BE ANY FURTHER SUBSTANTIVE CONTACT ON THESE MATTERS AT THE LONDON NATO MEETING NEXT WEEK. WHILE PRIME MINISTERS CARAMANLIS AND DEMIREL WOULD CERTAINLY TALK TO EACH OTHER DURING THENATO SESSIONS, A BILATERAL MEETING HAD NOT BEEN SCHEDULED BETWEEN THE TWO LEADERS, AS IT WOULD NOT BE PROPITIOUS FOR EITHER THE GREEKS OR THE TURKS TO HAVE SUCH A MEETING DURING THE PRE-ELECTORIAL PERIOD IN TURKEY, MACRIS CONCLUDED.
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